Reduce Your Lawn Area

America's landscapes are dominated by lawn or turf. Unfortunately, there is little environmental value to having wide expanses of lawn because it is a monoculture and offers almost no biodiversity. Usually turf is not even native to the area. Turf does not provide good places for most wildlife to live nor is it a good food source. Finally, turf does very little to help onsite management of water after a rain.

While, trees, shrubs, ground covers, flowerbeds, and naturalized meadows are better environmental choices, sometimes homeowners must keep a lawn. If you have a lawn, there are eco-friendly ways to maintain it.

- Use species cultivated for the Maryland piedmont (our region), such as the red and tall Fescues. This will reduce the need for fertilizer and pesticide applications and will be more resilient during dry spells.

- Do not OVER water your lawn. Lawns naturally enter a dormant phase in the heat of summer, sometimes turning brown. They will green up on their own as the weather cools.

- Properly apply fertilizers:
    - Have your soil tested for pH levels to best identify the need for additional nutrients. This will help determine which fertilizers and supplements are needed.
    - Select lawn-grade fertilizers that include slow release nitrogen to prevent lawn burn, reduce runoff and leaching of nutrients into groundwater.
    - Grass uses fertilizer best when it is actively growing. Once your lawn is established, it requires less fertilizer.
    - To prevent runoff pollution, do not apply fertilizers to frozen ground or pavement. Try to avoid applying fertilizer when it is forecasted to rain within 48 hours.

- Grass-cycle. Leave the height of your grass long when mowing and leave clippings on your lawn to decompose. "Grass-cycling" provides your lawn with a great source of nitrogen and saves water and fertilizer.

- Be careful when using pesticides.